

going to come back, and we are going to confirm her. But for some reason, the ranking member of the committee would like to just embarrass Dr. Cook a little bit more.

First, they make all these unwarranted attacks. Then they block her in committee. Then they—well, they called a boycott to stop any committee action on another very qualified woman. And I might add, parenthetically, because the oil industry didn't like her.

One of the things I particularly like about Dr. Cook is she understands—and maybe this is the objection. They want a Federal Reserve that is more sort of corporate-dominated, corporate-oriented instead of putting workers at the center of our economy.

I know Senator MERKLEY has been one of the leaders here, always understanding that workers should be the center of this economy. That is what Dr. Cook will do in the Federal Reserve.

She understands the smalltown South. She understands the industrial Midwest. She has worked on the west coast. She has worked all over this country. She is international in the way she looks at things. But, fundamentally, she comes down to ordinary, middle-class people and those who aspire to the middle class.

She is ready to get to work to protect Americans from rising prices. We need her. We need all of President Biden's nominees on the job right now.

But, again, Senate Republicans could have earlier said yes—he didn't have to object—yes, we will go forward with Powell; we will go forward with Jefferson, but we want to embarrass Dr. Cook first. We want to show that we have the political muscle to defeat a really, really, really accomplished Black woman first.

That is what they decided, that scoring political points is more important than serving the public and bringing down prices.

So today, once again, a qualified Black woman is going to have to wait. A qualified Black woman is going to have to wait and wait and wait. We are going to confirm her, but she is going to have to wait a little bit longer until the two Members of the Senate who are sick can return.

The American people are going to have to wait, all because Senate Republicans have decided their political gamesmanship is more important than the constituents they are supposed to serve.

I, one last time, say: Make no mistake, we will confirm all of these Federal Reserve nominees. We could do it a lot faster if my colleagues wanted to cooperate.

I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. TOOMEY. Mr. President, I have to say it is sad and shameful to hear the chairman suggest, which he has

done repeatedly now, including on the Senate floor, that there is some kind of racial bias against Black women that is a motivation for Republicans.

I would like to point out, for the record, the fact that on the Senate Banking Committee, every single Republican Senator has voted in favor of confirming five different Black women to different posts in just this Congress. President Biden's nominees who are Black women, and they include Cecilia Rouse, Nuria Fernandez, Adrienne Todman, Alexia Latortue, and Alanna McCargo. And yet we hear this preposterous notion that somehow the race of the candidate is what is going on here.

The fact is, we have a difference of opinion about what qualifies a person to serve on the Fed. And it is not some tiny, obscure minority that is concerned about Lisa Cook's qualifications to be fighting inflation when she refused to articulate any plan for dealing with inflation; it was the majority of the Senate who just voted. We just had the vote.

I should also point out that what is the difference here? The difference is, we want to vote, and you just heard the chairman block a vote on President Biden's nominee to Chair the Fed, Jerome Powell, and Professor Philip Jefferson. The chairman doesn't want votes on either of them, apparently, and certainly not on both of them; he just objected.

I would remind everyone that for months now, we have been trying to process the Fed nominees, and our Democratic colleagues refused. What we said was, there are five nominees. Only one of them we are going to object to processing. The reason was because of her radical views about using the supervisory powers of the Fed to allocate capital throughout the economy. That was a pretty radical idea. And guess what? The majority of the Senate agreed with us, and so she withdrew her candidacy.

We had offered for months now to process the other four. Earlier today, we were willing to do all three, but I think the record should show our Democratic colleagues refuse to allow us to have a vote today or tomorrow or this week—that is what we asked for; we used the exact same language the chairman had used earlier—on the Chairman of the Federal Reserve and Professor Philip Jefferson.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, just to be clear, we did offer just an hour, maybe 2 hours ago—the ranking member and I have spoken for maybe 20 minutes, more or less.

Just to be clear, we offered in that unanimous consent request that we vote on both Chair Powell and Dr. Jefferson and simply delay the vote on Dr. Cook because several Members who wanted to vote for her were not here.

Instead, the ranking member decided he wanted to just, one more time, try

to embarrass Dr. Cook. It is not really going to work because we are going to confirm her. But just to be clear, my motion, only 2 hours ago, was let's move forward on those two. That was rejected by Senator TOOMEY.

I yield the floor.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Sherilyn Peace Garnett, of California, to be United States District Judge for the Central District of California.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

TRIBUTE TO BJ WESTLUND

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, a little over 10 years ago, BJ Westlund made his way from Bend, OR, here to our Nation's Capital to serve his fellow Oregonians as a correspondence assistant in my office.

Over the last decade, BJ moved up the ranks to legislative correspondent and legislative aide and then had the opportunity to move back to Oregon, move back to Bend, as my field representative.

He has done an incredible job in that capacity, but he is now, after a number of years in that key role, ready to start a new chapter in his career.

I know that I speak for everyone on my team, whether in Washington, DC, or in Oregon, when I say that we are thrilled to see BJ continue to grow and thrive in his career, but we are also very saddened to see him go.

Ask anyone on the team, past or present, about BJ, and there are a couple of things that might jump to mind: his signature sense of style for one. He loves to wear a good vest. Whether here in DC or in Oregon, it is hard for anyone to picture BJ without a good vest. And wherever BJ is, you can bet there is a tasty cold mix of iced tea and lemonade not far away.

And BJ has taken on the role of overseeing the Team Merkley candy desk while he was here in Washington, DC, making sure it was always stashed with really good candy.

Before we changed offices in Hart, the legislative team was split between two floors. BJ was upstairs working on environmental and energy issues and referred to that area as "Eastern Oregon." But without fail, you could find a steady stream of folks going up the staircase to stop by BJ's desk and grab a piece of candy and chat. It was our version of the office water cooler and a way for BJ to help build a sense of community between all the team members.

That is the fourth thing that comes to mind when people think about BJ, is his sense of community, his welcoming presence, his ability to connect. It is what made him such an effective legislative staffer, working with groups on their priorities, advocating for critical appropriations funding. And for the

last 4 years, it is what made him such an incredible representative for our office throughout Central Oregon.

When asked to share her thoughts about BJ, one of our former team members who worked very closely with him over many years had this to say:

BJ is the calm in the storm. He is a steady, intelligent, caring, supportive teammate who cares beyond measure for his constituents. He has worked tirelessly to solve problems and bring Oregon tax dollars home to Central Oregon.

She continued:

Moving to his home office during COVID while continuing to be responsive to both teammates and constituents was a smooth transition because BJ handles challenges with aplomb.

And she closed by saying:

He is a treasure and just a wonderful human being.

And I couldn't say it any better.

BJ is the calm in the storm. BJ is a wonderful human being. BJ does work tirelessly to solve problems.

That is why, when the Bootleg fire struck Oregon last year, the third largest fire in our State's history, it was BJ who took charge of reaching out to and connecting with the communities impacted by the devastation. And it is a good thing he was, because community members, Tribal leaders, landowners, business owners, local electeds, agency leaders, relief agencies, and conservationists all looked to BJ to be there for them.

They knew that he would reach out. They knew he would listen to what they needed. They knew that he would do whatever it took to be there to respond to those challenges.

BJ has been the central driver on many major projects. One was getting funding for irrigation piping projects to help Oregon farmers get more water, while simultaneously putting more water back in our rivers, a positive environmental effect.

A second was helping an Oregonian Tribe find justice by finally repealing the fraudulent 1865 treaty that robbed them of their hunting and fishing rights.

A third was almost doubling the size of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument for future generations of Oregonians to enjoy, a monument that comes at the intersection of three critical mountain ranges and has flora and fauna found nowhere else in the world.

BJ is the kind of person who takes extra pride in drafting a customized letter to a student or making a one-off phone call to a constituent looking for help or advice because taking that small extra step can restore their faith and their trust in government.

But anyone who knows BJ wouldn't be surprised by any of this because they know how intensely he believes in public service. It is how he was raised. It is what he saw and learned growing up from his father, who was a good friend of mine, Ben Westlund, whom I had the privilege of serving with in the Oregon statehouse before he went on to

serve as an Oregon senator and Oregon treasurer.

We lost Ben about 12 years ago, before BJ came to work on my team, but I know how proud he would be if here with us today to see all the great things that his son has done and will continue to do in service to the people of Oregon.

So, BJ, thank you for all you have done throughout your time on Team Merkley to help build a better world. The team and I wish you well as you begin the next chapter of your life, and we can't wait to see all of the great things that you will continue to do and to achieve in the years to come.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Vermont.

CORPORATE GREED

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, the American people are increasingly outraged by the level of corporate greed that we are seeing in this country. As you know, while prices are rapidly increasing, corporate profits are soaring: in the oil industry in what we pay at the gas pumps; in the food industry in what we pay in grocery stores; in housing and in so many other areas. Meanwhile, while the very, very rich get richer, because of inflation, many workers are now seeing a decline in their real wages.

During this pandemic, unbelievably—and I hope that everybody knows this—while workers have been struggling, the billionaire class, people who are worth at least \$1 billion, have seen a \$2 trillion increase in their wealth; and the level of income and wealth inequality today is the highest that it has been in over 100 years.

Two people—Mr. Musk and Mr. Bezos—now own more wealth than the bottom 42 percent of American society—over 130 million people. Two people own more wealth than the bottom 130 million Americans.

In the midst of all of this—inflation, inequality, corporate greed—working people have declared loudly and clearly that enough is enough. We must end the corporate greed that is hurting so many of our families. Workers are now fighting back in a way that I have not seen for a very long time to improve their standard of living, to get the wages and benefits they desperately need, and to get a seat at the negotiating table in a way that has not taken place in a very, very long time.

Workers throughout this country are now in the process of organizing unions at a grassroots level and are prepared to go out on strike when the greed of large corporations prevents them from receiving decent wages and decent benefits. During the last couple of years, I

have personally been involved in a number of union-organizing campaigns and strikes throughout the country—from John Deere, Nabisco, and Kellogg's in the Midwest to the Warrior Met strike in Alabama—which continues today—to the Kroger grocery store strike in Colorado, and many others—and I have to say that I have been incredibly impressed by the solidarity and the courage of those workers who are prepared to stand up for justice against very powerful corporate interests.

As I am sure the Presiding Officer knows, a historic union victory was achieved nearly 1 month ago by Amazon workers in Staten Island. Amazon is one of the most profitable and one of the most powerful corporations in America. It is also one of the largest employers in our country, with close to a million workers.

We are talking, when we talk about Amazon, about a company that made a record-breaking \$36 billion in profit last year—\$36 billion. And that was a 453-percent increase from where it was before the pandemic. In other words, Amazon today is doing unbelievably well, and, in fact, it is doing better as a company than it has ever done before.

We are talking about a company that is owned by Mr. Jeff Bezos, the second wealthiest person in America, worth \$170 billion. Let me repeat that. He is not the wealthiest; he is only the second wealthiest, worth \$170 billion.

And here is something that is interesting and tells you about our corrupt political system and our regressive and unfair tax system. We are talking about a company—Amazon—that makes huge profits, that paid nothing—zero—in Federal income taxes in 2017 and 2018 and paid a lower tax rate, Federal tax rate, than a nurse or a firefighter last year, after making billions in profits. The average nurse, firefighter, or grocery store worker has an effective tax rate that is higher than what Amazon's was last year.

We are also talking about Mr. Bezos as an individual, who, in a given year, despite his extraordinary wealth, has also paid zero—nothing—in Federal taxes.

It is funny. On Sunday, I was in New York City, and I stopped in a McDonald's and was talking to one of the guys who works there. I asked him how much money he made. He makes \$15 an hour. And then he came back and said: Well, they take out over a dollar in Federal taxes. So a guy working in McDonald's for \$15 an hour probably has a higher tax rate than the second wealthiest person in this country.

That is what happens here in Washington when you are somebody like Mr. Bezos or some other billionaire and you make a lot of campaign contributions and you have an army of accountants and lawyers who help you avoid your tax responsibilities.

Mr. President, during the pandemic the last several years, Mr. Bezos, like